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FRED MILLER SCA/RA AND JOHN SCHLOSSER SCA/RA, S/CT
DS/ATA ATTN: BOB BOYKE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/13/2016
TAGS: PTER KCRM KISL EAID ASEC BG
SUBJECT: IMPROVING BANGLADESHI COUNTER TERRORISM
CAPABILITIES

REF: A. IIR 6 925 0070 06
 1B. SECSTATE 104785
 1C. MCCULLOUGH/ENGELKEN EMAIL MAY 18 2006

Classified By: AMB. PATRICIA BUTENIS, Reasons: Para 1.4 (D)

11. (C) ACTION REQUEST: See Paragraph 21.

12. (S) Summary: Embassy thoroughly reviewed USG Counter Terrorism assistance to Bangladesh and believes that enhancement to current programs is fully justified and should be explored. Paragraph 21 outlines proposed next steps. We do not believe that an assessment team (either multi-agency or PACOM) is possible before the next government takes office in January 2007. End Summary.

13. (S) The Ambassador convened a Counter Terrorism Sub-Group (CTSG) to include representatives from Justice, Defense, RAO, RSO, Political and Economic to assess mission's current programs, other countries, activities, inter-mission coordination, and effectiveness of these activities. The CTSG also reviewed what the GOB wants in additional assistance and material, what we think the GOB can absorb, and the level of CT coordination within the GOB. Point of contact for Embassy's CT Programs is Robert Wong (Classified EMAIL) wongre@state.sgov.gov (Unclassified EMAIL) wongre@state.gov, PHONE is 880 2 885 5500 X2306.

ANTI-TERRORISM ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

14. (S) Regional Security Officer (RSO) described the current Anti-Terrorism Assistance (ATA) program which has included training police on terrorist crime scene investigations, fraudulent document investigations, critical incident management, explosive incident management, crises response, VIP protection, post blast investigations and investigation and interrogation techniques.

15. (S) Many of these courses came with equipment grants that enabled the police to "stand up" mission capable bomb disposal units, post blast investigators and a counter-

assault force. The equipment grants were made possible through the mobile anti-terrorism training (MATT) courses. We need to sustain this training by offering advanced explosives incident countermeasures, post blast investigation, and crisis response team courses. We also want to offer more of the basic versions of these courses to train as many police as possible. The weapon of choice in Bangladesh is an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) and increasing the capabilities of the police to respond to emergencies involving IEDs is vital. The police have no capable dog handling units to search for explosives. Establishing a canine unit would significantly increase the ability of the police to search for IEDs. The GOB is unable to respond to chemical/biological emergencies, a serious and basic gap in its capabilities. There is also a critical need to train instructors to compensate for trained personnel being transferred out of specialized units and to establish continuity in training for the police.

¶ 6. We will request a DS/ATA In-Country Program officer to manage what we hope will be a robust FY-07 training program.

PISCES

¶ 7. (S) RSO and RAO described the Personal Identification Secure Comparison Evaluation System (PISCES) computer-based border entry

control system, which would permit US and Bangladesh security personnel to identify and intercept malafide travelers on real time basis. While Home Minister Babar agreed in an MOU to accept and install PISCES, the GOB does not want to replace its current system, FORTRAC with the basic PISCES version, which captures less information than FORTRAC. We have been advised that only the basic PISCES system is available.

DOD PROGRAMS

¶ 8. (S) The Defense Attaché said that the only designated GOB CT force is the first Paratroop Commando Regiment (Ref B). However, while the 1st Paras continue to train, a newer para-military police unit, the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) appears to have supplanted the 1st Paras as the preferred CT force. (It was the RAB that captured the August 17, 2005 bombers). The 1st Paras are frustrated that they do not play a larger role given their designated status, and that they do not get the equipment the RAB gets. However, we believe that training directed to the 1st Paras, if offered, should be continued as all military units rotate into or augment the para-military forces or the RAB.

¶ 9. (S) The Office of Defense Cooperation's (ODC) programs primarily focus on enhancing GOB maritime border security by supporting efforts to expand the Coast Guard, improving port security and providing training in basic Coast Guard skills such as boarding of ships. ODC noted that while State S/CT ranks Bangladesh as a Tier I nation, with the highest access to program aid, State IMET/FMF ranks Bangladesh as a Tier II nation. As we consider shifting support to the police, we

will explore IMET/FMF flexibility to fund more police training.

COMBATTING TERRORISM FINANCE

¶10. (S) The Resident Legal Advisor (RLA) is the Justice Department representative and oversees the development of an anti-money laundering and terrorist financing (AML/TF) regime in Bangladesh. She has formed a working group comprised of the UK and Australian High Commissions and the International Monetary Fund to assist the Bangladesh Bank in setting up an effective Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU). She is also working with the UK to develop a task force called the Financial Crimes Unit (FCU) which will include police and prosecutors to secure convictions in money laundering and terrorist financing offenses. Eventually the FCU would be expanded to include representatives from Customs, NGO Affairs Bureau, and the National Board of Revenue. To that end, RLA will continue to train police, prosecutors, the central bank and judges in financial investigations and financial document analysis. This training includes monthly workshops and interactive seminars with instructors from the FBI, IRS, and DOJ.

¶11. (S) RLA's main concern is building a strong prosecutorial team. Government prosecutors are not seen to be honest or skilled enough to vigorously pursue financial crimes prosecutions. RLA has contacted two of the country's top defense attorneys to conduct training in criminal procedure and trial advocacy. Initially, there will be two lawyers from the Attorney General's office seconded to the FCU to start the prosecution proceedings rolling. To complement the embassy's counter-terrorism strengthening

efforts, the RLA consulted with International Criminal Investigation Training Assistance Program (ICITAP), DOJ's police training and technical assistance program, to determine what they can contribute. They immediately answered that they can offer a "First Responder Course" for 60 people over a 2-week period in late July. RLA will, per RSO's suggestion, ask for his former ATA students to participate so as to hone their skills.

MACHINE READABLE PASSPORTS

¶12. (S) We funded a study by the International Organization for Migration to determine how best to make GOB passports compliant with International Civil Aviation Organization standards. The study documented the GOB's passport and issuing office's security deficiencies. Our conclusion is that the GOB will not meet its stated goal of MRP issuance in three months, or in the near future.

REWARDS FOR JUSTICE PROGRAM

¶13. (S) We discussed the pros and cons of an RFJ program in Bangladesh. We considered the personnel resources required; the likelihood of large numbers of false leads; and the sensitivities of the GOB to an RFJ program that may be viewed as an

indication that the USG believed Bangladesh had become a safehaven for Al Qaeda. However, we concluded that the possibility of obtaining useful CT information and helping keep the public's attention on CT threats outweighed the negatives.

¶14. (S) We will pursue establishing RFJ at post with an anticipated start-up date after the January 2007 election, to avoid the RFJ program being interpreted as a reflection on the current government's CT efforts. Point of Contact (POC) for this is RSO Nick Sabruno
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OTHER FOREIGN MISSION'S PROGRAMS

¶15. (C) Other foreign missions focus largely on police training. The UK, Canada and Australia are all assessing police and security forces, in coordination with the embassy. The UK and Australia are considering providing assistance to RAB. In addition, the UK plans to support a 30 million Euro UNDP program to upgrade the police. The Embassy participates in the local G8 Counter Terrorism Action Group (CTAG) and coordinates with the local missions of Canada, UK, and Australia on CT.

¶16. (SBU) The Japanese since April 2004 have provided police vehicles, built police stations, instituted a Japanese-style community policing program, provided computer links between police stations, and provided forensics equipment. They plan to provide technical support and instruction using the forensics equipment. (We had no information on the success of the Japanese Program). Poloff will meet with other Missions undertaking police development efforts including UNDP and Germany to improve our coordination and information sharing.

GOB COUNTER-TERRORISM CAPABILITIES

¶17. (S) CTSG discussed the shortcomings of the GOB's CT efforts. Law enforcement officers are detailed to specialized units only for short-term assignments which undermines the continuity and expertise required to combat terrorism. For example, with no specific CT career path there is no incentive for officers to train and remain in these essential specialized CT units. Most police officers serve a two to three year tour in a specialized unit and then transfer to a completely unrelated job. As a result, there is little institutional knowledge of critical needs such as bomb disposal or forensic investigations (RSO noted that the police commit to a two-year tour of duty in the unit for which they receive DS/ATA training). We believe that current U.S. training with the military is successful as many Bangladeshi generals have received U.S. training at some time in their career, but some of the training is too technical for Bangladesh to absorb or to use.

RAB

¶18. (S) We discussed engagement with the RAB, launched in 2004 as an elite crime-

fighting force, and now the lead CT unit in Bangladesh. We are well aware of the RAB's poor human rights performance, with a record high of 26 people killed in May in so-called "cross-fires" (AKA extra-judicial killings) and understand the constraints of the Leahy Amendment on State funding. However, the RAB is extremely popular with a public fed up with a criminal justice system that cannot catch and punish criminals. Even the opposition Awami League has said it is likely to maintain the RAB if it wins the January election. We think we should explore the possibility of providing significant, intensive human rights training to the RAB, coupled with the message that such training will enhance their reputation in Bangladesh. Of course we realize that if corrupt police and judges continue to accept bribes to set criminals free on bail, allowing them to pursue their activities, the temptation for RAB to continue extra-judicial killings remains. However, refusing to engage the RAB does nothing to change its behavior or to improve the human rights situation in Bangladesh (The Australians and the UK are also reviewing possible engagement with the RAB along these lines). Home Minister Babar advised the Ambassador that he was setting up a CT cell in the RAB and that officers in that unit would be required to serve between two and four year tours.

¶19. (S) We discussed initial first steps in the event we (State) or other USG agencies have some flexibility in assisting in improving the RAB's human rights performance:

- determine the current level of human rights training;
- ascertain the ability of the RAB to absorb human rights training;
- improve that level by providing human rights training to some internationally recognized standard;
- improve personal accountability by systematic tracking of police and RAB trained by U.S. and other foreign missions; and
- improve the transparency of the RAB's post "cross fire" review process, in which each "cross-fire" incident is reviewed by a magistrate and then almost always declared a legal, defensible police action.

EQUIPMENT REQUESTS

¶20. (C) While we have not been directly asked for assistance to the RAB, the GOB regularly requests equipment we believe would be used by RAB. This includes: forensic lab equipment, helicopters, centralized information data base technology, electronic eavesdropping equipment, and chemical-biological counter-measures response equipment. We have not provided these items and have discouraged such requests.

THE WAY AHEAD

¶21. (C) Following is a summary of action items for the Embassy and Washington:

DS/ATA courses/Program Officer: Additional ATA training (especially MATT training), is crucial, and an In-Country Program Officer to manage these courses would enhance their effectiveness.

IMET/FMF: We will consider requesting more DOD CT courses.

RFJ: DS has already approved an RFJ program in Bangladesh. SOCOM has offered possible support through funding of a dedicated FSN to staff the program. We will move forward but with a start-up date after the January election, to avoid politicizing the program.

PISCES: Our understanding is that we cannot offer the GOB the customized version it wants but request confirmation in light of Home Minister Babar's raising the issue in his recent meeting with S/CT (ref C).

RAB: We request that Washington continue to look at ways to engage the RAB in significant human rights training as a prerequisite to any possible CT training and assistance. While we have serious concerns about RAB's human rights record, we take the long view that the group has an increasingly important CT role which is likely to continue in any new government.

Assessment Team: We had earlier given suggestions to SCA on CT options (McCullough/Gastright e-mail), including a request for an interagency team to assess the CT capabilities and needs of the GOB. The Ambassador also discussed possible PACOM CT assistance during her consultations. Our assessment now is that any such evaluation should wait until after the election. Anything we do now risks being politicized and interpreted as support for one party or another and our CT interests in Bangladesh are too important to jeopardize in this way.

BUTENIS